



Photo: Paul Bramble

CHESAPEAKE BAY

HISTORY

The Chesapeake Bay has a storied tradition of water-oriented recreation. For generations, hunters have traveled from thousands of miles away to spend a wintery morning gazing over decoys in hopes that a flock of canvasbacks might set their wings. In better weather, fishermen cast for trophy striped bass and bluefish, or run trotlines for the legendary Chesapeake blue crab. The Bay has also long supported a robust commercial fishery for crabs, oysters and fish; George Washington himself was an avid commercial shad fisherman in Chesapeake tributaries. From the famous decoy carvers of the Upper Bay, to the watermen of the Lower Bay, the Chesapeake is rich in tradition and history.



Photos: Paul Bramble



CHALLENGE

The Chesapeake Bay is an immense watershed, spanning six states, 64,000 square miles and including countless small tributaries. The watershed includes major cities such as Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Richmond; as well as productive agricultural areas specializing in the production of corn, soybeans, dairy and poultry. The sheer size and diversity of the watershed represent perhaps the largest challenge to the health of the Bay and require a high level of coordination and commitment.

Runoff from parking lots, highways, and lawns combines with excess fertilizer from farmland to degrade the water quality of the Chesapeake, causing toxic algae blooms responsible for oxygen-depleted “dead zones,” where aquatic life ceases to exist. Soil erosion from construction projects and major storm events muddies the water, reducing sunlight levels critical for underwater grasses. As water quality diminishes, opportunities for world-class hunting and angling disappear, as well.

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OUR STRATEGY

As policies have been made that impact the Chesapeake Bay, be they land-use decisions, nutrient regulations, or storm water management, the voice of sportsmen has been noticeably absent. From state and local governments to the U.S. Congress, policies are being debated and implemented that have the ability to improve or degrade hunting and angling opportunities across the Bay watershed. It is time for the reasonable voice of sportsmen from across the watershed to be heard when decisions get made. The TRCP will continue its work to engage sportsmen in issues affecting their favorite hunting and fishing spots and to ensure that policymakers at all levels hear from this economically important sector.



Photo: Dusan Smetana

ACTION

Waterfowl and deer hunters spend much time on agricultural lands, which provide ideal habitat for important game species. Likewise, anglers rely on farmers and landowners to reduce runoff to help ensure high water quality. Many voluntary and popular conservation programs exist within the Farm Bill that help farmers and landowners meet regulatory requirements and achieve conservation goals; these programs provide incentives for farmers to improve their operations for the sake of fish and wildlife habitat and increased water quality that benefits hunters and anglers directly. The TRCP seeks over the coming Farm Bill to engage sportsmen in the Chesapeake watershed to help support Farm Bill conservation programs as a way to meet broader Chesapeake restoration goals.

WHY THE TRCP?

With a robust agricultural and private lands program and staff with intimate knowledge of the Chesapeake, the TRCP is well-positioned to lead sportsmen in the fight to restore the Bay. Additionally, given the TRCP “partnership model,” we are capable of bringing a diverse group of hunting and angling voices to bear in support of Bay conservation.

To learn more about the TRCP and the work we’re doing, visit www.trcp.org or contact Meg McKinnon, development manager, at mmckinnon@trcp.org or 202-639-8727, ext. 24.



“The Chesapeake Bay watershed is a special place for hunters and anglers, full of great opportunities to get outside and enjoy the traditions we love. Sportsmen and -women must be a strong voice for conservation of the Chesapeake to ensure that the Bay’s future is bright for fish and wildlife. If we don’t join together to protect the outdoor heritage of the Bay region, who will?”

Steve Kline
Center for Agricultural
and Private Lands Director

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